

## Revitalization of Traditional Indian Games & Traditional Indian Foods in an Effort to Prevent Diabetes

Jewel Payne, Tribal Dietitian, Patricia Turcotte, Traditional Games Certified, Fort Peck Community College and Susan Jordan, Indian Health Service Dietitian presented to the Tribal Council on November 28 garnering support for revitalizing traditional Native games and health education into the school system on the Fort Peck Reservation.

School aged Indian children are at significant risk for early childhood obesity and diabetes. Overweight and obesity is now the most common medical problem of American Indian and Alaskan Native youth. Children in our community are showing signs of diabetes by as early as age 4. *Children who develop diabetes by age 10 will shorten their life expectancy by as much as 17-26 years.*

Jewel Payne gave an evidenced based presentation on the prevention of diabetes through the use of culturally appropriate physical activity that connects Native Youth with their heritage, an idea that Native people have known for a long time that only recently has been fully appreciated.

She also reported that when she introduced Native games into the Frazer school system children that previously did not get involved with “gym” class participated and in some cases led the activity.

Patricia Turcotte who is currently certified in Native Games education, spoke eloquently on the Indian Education For All Act of 1972, specifically addressing the requirement for the public educational system to respect the cultural heritage and provide “unique opportunities for social, physical and educational development of every child’s individual potential as a tribal member and Indian Citizenship.” She also spoke about the need to *certify* teachers in Native Games and for Fort Peck Tribes to host the 2007 International Games. Fort Peck is the only tribe in Montana that has not yet hosted this event.

Susan Jordan, an Indian Health Service Dietitian for the Fort Peck Diabetes Program spoke about the upcoming 2006 School Wellness Policy requiring all schools on the Reservation to implement *standards for nutrition and physical education* that support childhood health. She presented alarming rates of childhood obesity and schools have a *responsibility in providing a healthy school environment for children to grow and learn.*